

# THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



**TONI ATKINS**  
COUNCILMEMBER  
THIRD DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 15, 2002

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### **Councilmember Atkins Hails Parks Initiative Funds Will Help Deferred Maintenance in Balboa Park**

#### **Voters Will Be Asked to Dedicate Mission Bay Revenue for Regional Park Improvements**

**San Diego** - Councilmember Toni Atkins has put her full support behind a voter initiative unveiled on Valentine's Day which seeks to amend the City Charter to allocate Mission Bay Park lease revenue back into Mission Bay and to other regional parks throughout San Diego, including Balboa Park. The initiative is being spearheaded by Second District Councilmember Byron Wear.

Atkins and Sixth District Councilmember Donna Frye joined Wear and Carolyn Chase, chair of Mayor Murphy's Environmental Advisory Committee, at a news conference along Mission Bay announcing the proposed City Charter Amendment. The four called on San Diegans to sign a petition to qualify the initiative to be on the November 2002 ballot. Nearly 90,000 valid signatures of registered voters are needed for this to occur.

Our public parks never seem to get a fair share of the City's general fund budget, said Atkins. By qualifying this Charter amendment initiative for the ballot, and voting for it in November, City residents can help us catch up on a backlog of deferred maintenance and improvements recommended for Balboa Park.

Atkins stated that over \$16 million in deferred maintenance needs have been identified for Balboa Park, however there is no current funding identified to pay for them. Among these needs are replacement of outdated playground equipment, reconstruction of recreation facilities such as tennis and shuffleboard courts, repairs to public buildings—including the securing of ornamentation on some of the park's treasured historic buildings and providing Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.

Balboa Park is one of the jewels of our city, and is visited and enjoyed by an estimated 14 million residents and tourists each year, Atkins said. And yet, despite the high regard which the public has for Balboa Park, there are numerous City-owned buildings in the park--many of which are historic--that are in need of major repair. This initiative will help us begin to address this situation.

With the adoption of the Mission Bay Park Master Plan in 1994, the City of San Diego established a blueprint for \$200 million in public and recreational improvements for the park. According to Wear, plans for major improvements to parks throughout the City have been on the drawing boards at City Hall for decades without identified sources of funding.

On Valentine's Day, this Charter Amendment is truly a heartfelt initiative to benefit Mission Bay Park for generations to come, said Wear. Our parks have been short-changed for too long, and it is time to identify a guaranteed source of funding to increase open space, improve water quality and expand wildlife habitat. This is a sweetheart deal for our parks.

Currently, all commercial lease revenue generated in Mission Bay Park goes directly into the City's General Fund. If approved by the voters, the initiative would require that Mission Bay lease revenue, in excess of the \$18 million currently going to the general fund, be allocated specifically for parks. The proposal stipulates that two-thirds of that excess revenue be allocated to Mission Bay Park with the remainder to fund improvements at regional parks throughout the City.

Regional parks throughout San Diego have Master Plans to guide their development according to the wishes of public, citizen and community groups. In addition to Mission Bay and Balboa Park, Mission Trails, Otay River Valley and Los Penasquitos Canyon will receive funding for improvements. Coastal beaches and the newly formed San Diego River Park, which cuts across some of the most densely populated portions of the City, will also benefit.

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